Into the wild with the Amiga

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

While many people envisage the Amiga as primarily a frivolous games console, in its heyday it was the silicon equivalent of the malleable chameleon. The entire range from the A1000 through to the misguided CD32 would often surface in the strangest of places when you least expected it.

If you've read my Amiga trivia article you'll know that the Lever Brothers soap manufacturing plant at Port Sunlight was powered by A2000s, though that is merely the tip of a clandestine industrial and creative iceberg.

A2000s were also deployed for medical imaging purposes in analytical testing at Imperial College London, and A500s served as astronomical graphics terminals at Jodrell Bank Observatory in Cheshire.

Elsewhere, Amiga computers located in dental surgeries aided in teaching endodontics, operated as architectural

design XCad installations at Hamworthy Engineering, powered a gargantuan video wall at Wolverhampton Wanderers football club, and projected interactive learning displays at the Imperial War Museum.

The A3000 was the brains behind the Dactyl Nightmare virtual reality coin-op arcade game, the Israeli Air Force capitalised on Amiga-powered flight simulators for pilot training schemes, and the Ford Motor Company's automobile assembly plants were no strangers to the Amiga either.

If like me you love zoos nearly as much as the Amiga, you'll really get a kick out of this next fusion of wetware and retro hardware.

In 1995 in a promotion which formed part of a 'Year of the Cat' celebration (opened by Chris Packham from BBC's Really Wild Show), Colchester zoo joined forces with Premier Vision in a project that tapped into the potential of CD32s to educate visitors in the wily ways of oversized moggies. Authentic ones this time even, not the 'Essex lion' spotted in August 2012.

The A1200-minus-the-keyboard games consoles were connected to touch-screen Philips monitors, which displayed an interactive GUI customised for the zoo using the Optonica CD authoring system. The presentation included various didactic, wildlife-centric quizzes, CDXL video sequences and sound clips to ensure guests left the park thoroughly informed and entertained.

The disc wasn't released for use at home, though some commentators at the time remarked that it might not have been such a bad idea had it been expanded to include material focused on a wider selection of species.

If choo-choos were more your cup of tea in 1990, you might have preferred visiting the London Transport Museum where a medley of A500s and A2000s had been configured to execute an impressive 3D underground train simulator.

As part of their new tube centenary exhibition in Covent Garden, the interactive displays assembled by Aeon Design comprised recreations of the driver's cabs of two trains, a vintage model from 1890 and a contemporary 1990 design. A span of one hundred years - what a coincidence!

Each engine chugged into the station fully equipped with authentic, digitised sound and speech effects, allowing guests to experience first hand the rush of driving the genuine article, albeit minus the inconvenience of ramming it nose-first into the path of an oncoming vehicle. British Rail will never let me live that down! Come on, it's been ten years and no one *important* died.

The London Transport Museum were so on-board with Commodore that when they invested in a £4m overhaul of their entire operation in 1993, they installed a networked fleet of 109 CD32 units. These were tasked with coordinating the operation of a multitude of state of the art interactive displays responsible for delivering multimedia content to visitors.

Hopefully, this brief sojourn through the world of obscure commercial Commodore connections will give you a flavour of the diverse array of potential applications.

Over to you. Whaddaya know Joe? Did your workplace use A600s to train trapezing gerbils, bake cannabis cookies, or just as a wedge to prop open the office door?